Speech by Mr. G.P. Croes, President of the Social Democratic Party/Movimiento Electoral di Pueblo

Brothers and Sisters;

If I have been able to read and understand the intentions of our brother Ruben Berrios I would have presented a different type of speech.
Nevertheless I ask you all to forgive me for presenting a topic that we have prepared theoretically but that we will be able to compare it in the following matter.

Aruba who wants to break the links it has with a European country but that finds itself within a state entity with other islands. Islands that still have not pronounced themselves in favour of their independence.

Apart from this on the hand of the Metropolis, the erroneous interpretation of the non-distruption principle according to resolution 2625 of the U.N. And on the other hand we could also make hear the comparison of the 83% of the people of Aruba voting in favor of the independence and our great friend and brother Ruben Berrios where the right to self-determination of the Puerto Rican people has been acknowledged but unfortunately people do perhaps for an excessive dependence has lost its own identity. And now it should undergo a process of creating an awareness in order to be able to chose his own freedom.

That is why, according to my speech, I am going to defend the struggle of the Aruban people. This subject is not a simple one . Decolonization, self-determination and freedom are terms that quite easily can be used in an abusive manner on the one hand within the context of exploitation by the formal colonial powers and on the other hand within the context of neo-colonialism, of the exhibition of power of the large countries, as well as the subtle economic pressure.

When I speak of decolonization I am referring to the political evolution of the territories possessed by the Eastern part of Europe and that ended in autonomy and independence. This happened especially after the second World War.

With regard to this, the Bandung Congress held in 1955 was of the utmost importance. The participants of this Congress met with the common aversion they felt for colonialism. They expressed in their final document that colonialism oppresses the national culture of the peoples and that the guarantees of the human being to its rights and self-determination of peoples and countries should be defended.

This thesis might seem obvious nowadays but at that time it was a revolutionary thesis because colonialism had deep roots in the international laws. The European kings received their

authorities directly from God and therefore they could exercise this authority in all the corners of the world.

Until in 1855 in the Berlin Conference they tried to attain the right to colonization each state that had the possibilities to do so. The law of the strongest was accepted. And they were free to carry out colonization.

The international law did not prohibit the overthrowing of the colonial regimes. The people who tried to do this could be sure that their efforts would be complete depressed.

The League of Nations gave rise to the internationalization of the colonial topic. Nevertheless there were no sanctions nor penalties and this decreased greatly the credibility of this organization.

Nevertheless the weak efforts of the League of Nations dedicated some efforts to decolonization after the Second World War . With the signing of the Atlantic Chart in August 1941 the western states among which we had Great Brittain as the strongest and largest colonial power of the times, clearly stated their altered vision regarding the colonial relationship.
This Chart had as a basic and main principle the right of all peoples to elect their own form of government. Nevertheless Great Brittain did not accept to include in this Chart or document the word Independence. They considered that self government did not include the possibility of independence.

"What the dependent people wanted was an increasing measure of self government; independence would come, if at all, by natural development."

This declaration was paramount importance for the decolonization of the Caribbean area. It gave rise to a lot of discussion in the United Nations that gave as a result the demand that the colonial states had to submit to the Secretary General statistical data on these dependent territories.

Until 1954 with the drafting of the Statutes of the Netherlands which the different islands became equivalent parts also Curacao had the duty to inform the United Nations according to article 73 of the United Nations chart.

The things evolved very rapidly and anti colonialistic block was formed.

Also the attitude of the colonial powers was changing. In

In 1960 resolution 1514 was adopted. This declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and

peoples was adopted on December 14th unanimously. This resolution the most important argument of colonialism was eliminated. The social, economic and political development of a country could never be pretext to postpone its independence. The United Nations went a step further: In Resolution 2105 the legitimacy of an armed uprising against a colonial regime was adpted with 74 votes in favour and 6 against and in these six we had those of the United States and Great Britain and there were 27 abstentions.

Brothers, we all know that the former colonialism has almost disappeared completely. The economic exploitation desguised with new forms. The political independence in many occasions led to new forms of dependence. Colonialism might have disappeared apparently but many colonial relationships continue to exist under modified versions. Therefore we must struggle strongly against this neo-colonialism, or neo-capitalism as we did before.

In Aruba we have behind us many years of discussion regarding the right for self-determination. This right can be defined as the need to take in account the will of the people expressed with complete freedom.
In the Charter of the United Nations, this is one of the main objectives.

Article 1 paragraph 2 it says:
"The purpose of the United Nations are: .... to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of people.."

The principle of self-determination and the decolonization process obviously are closely related.
In a recommendation of the International Court of the Hague to the General Assembly of the United Nations in regard to the Spanish Sahara, we could read the following:

"The principle of self-determination as a right of people and its application for the purpose of bringing all colonial situations to a speedy end, were enunciated in the Declaration on the granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. General Assembly Resolution 1514."

There exists an even more important relationship between the right to self-determination and human rights. The right to self-determination is the first requirement to be able to have the other rights.
Only when the persons in a collectivity can exercise the right to self-determination is it possible to live without any discrimination and take advantage of all the other rights.

Frequently it is so that the exercise of the self-determination principle could bring about the disintegration of states

that have recently gained their independence. That were created in many occasions by the colonial powers as an artificial unit. Several resolutions cover this topic.

The states have the obligations to respect the right of self-determination and to independence of the peoples and nations. The right to self-determination of the nations means according to the resolution 2625, the obligation of each state to abstain itself with regard to actions that might be arranged for partial , or total destruction of national entities and territorial integrities of any other state or country.

This resolution at the time of the discussion of the different agreements on human rights of 1966 civic and political rights of human beings. In that occasion we went to Holland to discuss this matter because this resolution was applied against the right of self-determination of the people of Aruba. And during these discussions at the Dutch Parliament we have completely unmasked this argument.

What does this resolution mean? Does it only involves the independent and sovereign states?
On the basis of the discussions it must be clear to all of you that the Netherlands Antilles are neither independent nor sovereign and therefore the principles of "non-disruption" as is included in this resolution, cannot be applied to Aruba.

Therefore the government of the Netherlands primarily accepted a motion in which the self-determination right of each people of each island of the Netherlands Antilles was recognized and acknowledged.

This point of view was expressed by the islands of the Netherlands Antilles, the Government of Netherlands Antilles as well as the Dutch Government during the Round Table Conference held in Holland last February, with regard to a new state structure of the Netherlands Antilles.

To summarize , the independence, the sovereignity, the national unity and the territorial integrity are related among themselves.

Brothers, when Aruba gains its independence once again we will be have a micro-state. Many people are against the formation of these micro-states due to their small size, the very small population and the limited resources.

I can mention as examples here Dominica with 95.000 inhabitants, St. Lucia with 120.000, St. Vincent 100.000, Grenada 100.000 and Na-uru, an island in the South Pacific with no more than 6600 inhabitants.

Once more it is of the greatest importance, the attitude of

the United Nations with regard to the phenomenon of the micro-states. This organization nevertheless does not establish any condition with regard to the size or dimension of the territory or economic potential.

In 1965 a resolution was adopted where it was said that the United Nations had to pay special attention to the micro-states in order to make it possible for all people to implement and carry out the right to self-determination. The micro-states have shown and proved their viability . Certain number of islands in our region are good examples of this.

Nevertheless what I already mentioned yesterday it does not imply that we cannot form institutionalized entities of cooperation on different grounds.
It is not only a matter of the economic potential because prosperity by itself does not solve all the problems.

Independence is important due to the self awareness of people. It is very satisfactory to be able to determine your own destiny.

Notwithstanding how small or dependent one might be, these are true feelings, important feelings. The awareness of our own identity and culture, the wisdom and the knowledge of a place of our own under the sun.

The option for independence also indicates the option of a self-government form. Many times countries adapt the institutions and structures of the old metropolis without having adapted said institutions to the local situation.

The Constitution that on many occasions is a copy of the Constitution of European countries, in many occasions become an obstacle for fu ture developments. It may require many years before these negative influences can be eliminated.

Nevertheless it is very important , Mr. Chairman, that during the decolonization and self-determination process to try to structure an ideological phases that might save as motivation for people that is marching towards independence.
Our party, the M.E.P., has made a decision towards the social-democratic orientation.

In this island there are many people, who have the opinion that the option of the social-democracy is equivalent to an option in favour of Moscow and against the United States.

At present it has become a habit to devide the world in two fields: On one hand the United States that defends the private enterprise and on the other hand the Communist World. To say it in other words, on one hand the imperialistic

countries before the third world that is oppressed and exploited. The rich countries in opposition to the poor countries.

Social-democracy is an opponent and adversary of capitalism imperialism and communism.
Social-democracy is an adversary of the violation of human rights and of the oppression of opinions different to ours.
Social-democracy arises from international solidarity among the peoples of the world and it is based on a more just sharing the world prosperity.

We should not believe that monopolistic capitalism operates only in the less developped countries. The capitalistic system is not capable of solving the unemployment problems, equal opportunities in education, environmental polution, collective services and social previsions.

And what can communism offer? State-bureaucracy, oppression of the freedom of expression, centralization that represses all initiative, uniformity.

Neo-colonialism, both of them from the communisticas well as the capitalistic side, gives rise to many problems in the country itself as well as in the communist power. Therefore in a developing country it is of utmost importance that the development strategy is not based in the force creation of industrious centers in the rural areas, on the contrary it should be based on a gradual process of transition that should have as a final goal, to develop in an adequate and balanced manner the human resources.

Together with this the foreign investments can represent a useful contribution but these investments should not lead us to a new relationship of dependence but to an enlargement and extention of the economic resistence of the people.

Neo-colonialismo frequently uses relationships of economic dependence. The interests that come about from this can lead us to a direct economic influence that sometimes can become of a permanent nature.

We can also call this neo-capitalism.

In regard to what we have said, we hope that what I mentioned at the beginning of my presentation, in other words that brother Berrios and his brothers of Puerto Rico, will know and will be able to convince the Puerto Rican people of the need to struggle for their independence.
And we Social-Democrats, within the spirit of solidarity, don't we have also a responsibility in this. Should we leave our brothers from Puerto Rico on their own to carry out this enormous task or should we give the necessary support so that they will be able to create awareness in their people.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes military help is sent to another country or coup d'etats are organized but there are many indirect interventions that can be even more effective. This can be carried out by means of corruption of political leaders, financing of political parties, trade unions and social organizations.

We can compare all the propaganda and anti-propaganda that has been carried out against this Congress, against the M.E.P., of other forzes here in Aruba that are financed from alien elements, not only to discredit the M.E.P., not only to discredit this Conference and Social-Democracy as a whole but also to put an end a sacred struggle and battle of this people to attain its freedom, its liberty, to try to keep it dependent and therefore some sectors can continue to exploit our people and putting an end to our national identity and culture

We could also present at this time what has been already done, but only as examples by Guatemala, El Salvador and Haiti.
These are outstanding examples of such an intervention especially the small states should be aware, because due to their small dimension they are especially vulnrable to neo-colonialistic influences.

Brothers, notwithstanding the problems I have described, Aruba is marching towards its independence. Aruba will be independent.
Now after many years the right of self-determination for our island was recognized and signed by the highest legislative body of the three instances of the Kingdom.

Nevertheless, we understand quite clearly that when you struggle for independence new dependences are created, new links with the other Netherlands Antilles and with Holland with the United States and the neighbor countries. Nevertheless Aruba will have to express itself within the frameworks that exists, as an independent state with its own economic, financial and political orientation.

Within this idea the cultural, social and economic structure will be comprehended together with the other micro-states in the Caribbean area , who want to cooperate with the states that share the principles of parliamentary social democracy. States that have substituted the colonial yoke by dictatorship imposed by themselves are of no interest to us.

We understand very well that this integration and cooperation is not simple. The integration of the political right many times has failed . We know quite well the example of the federation of the West Indies and within the Netherlands Antilles, we consider cooperation on the basis of the political state of principle as non-feasible.

The federation of the West Indies dissolved due to economic reasons as a consequence of the competition that existed between the two major islands: Trinidad and Jamaica.

This was pointed out beforehand by two specialized persons in the Caribbean problems: Strong and Mitchel.
They stated the state federation former government had a completely different dimension and in many occasions it is contradictory to a federation of islands.
Islands are islands: each one of them has its own identity, its own culture; the peoples have their own human values, and their own political ideas and principles.

To summarize this is what we can call insularism.

We are living the process of decolonization. We have first of all to achieve our freedom, our sovereignty and on the basis of these two concepts we should form or establish institutional links with the other Caribbean islands that after some time can lead us to a political integration.

To impose a state federation form of government is deemed to fail. We hope that this can be used as a work document in our efforts to establish cooperation links among the islands but preserving the identity, culture, human values and political ideology of each one of them.

Nevertheless in the future we will need many cooperation links in order to maintain ourselves. These cooperation links will be the oxigen that will allow us to preserve our lives.

It is essential and it is obvious that the micro-states try to reach new forms of cooperation based on international laws and by means of free elections.

Within this cooperation the Social-Democratic ideology will be our guide. This option means that we fully support the parliamentary democracy and in doing so we do not define ourselves as perfect social democrats.

A lot has to be done in Aruba so that the social-democratic ideology can have a total acceptance. We have chosen nevertheless, a democratic path, quite consciously, where the development of the human being is the most important part, where we place the interest of those who are marginated on the first level.

This Congress is for us a historic landmark and a farewell.
A landmark because many of our achievements have been achieved over the last few years. The people of Aruba has found its own identity again and has a goal before it. A goal towards which it can address itself: Independence.
And a farewell because the MEP wishes to establish its insular orientation inwards, seeking an affiliation to the ideology of Social Democracy worldwide

Brothers and sisters, the comments made by brother Berrios is not exactly the same as ours. What we do have in common is that the representative of the Puerto Rican people is fully aware of a just struggle for the achievement of the freedom for his people. Eventhough at this time, for reasons that have been mentioned, the people are not aware of the value of said struggle.

Here in Aruba we also wish for independence, not in the first place against the Antillian system, not against the islands of the Antilles, not that, but rather for the benefit of harmony of cooperation among the islands.

An effort to force Aruba, from the top, with the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles to participate in a state will fail, must fail as the federations as it has been mentioned here in the Caribbean.

What happened; at the moment we are appealing to see if we can start prudently to establish forms of cooperation. What we wish to do this time with the cooperation of the metropolis and of course in an environment of solidarity with the fraternal parties of social democracy. What we wish to do is to determine as of now that we wish to be free and we shall be free. We shall achieve the liberty of our people but at the same time we shall not fail as other islands of the Caribbean has failed. We wish to form an institutionalized system of cooperation according to international laws to guarantee that we will have success and prevent the negative aspects of mini-states.

Yesterday, during the inaugural speech I made to this conference, I expressed the hope that this new form of cooperation will be a proto-type of cooperation, not only for the islands of the Netherlands Antilles but also for many more islands of the Caribbean.

Hence I shall conclude by saying: Viva Puerto Rican Independence and long live the independence of Aruba and long live the independence of the other islands of the Netherlands Antilles and the independence of the other islands of the Caribbean and long live an institutionalized form of cooperation among all the islands of the Caribbean. I thank you.

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